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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000500

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KJUS I2

SUBJECT: KARBALA: DA'WA-SADRIST DEAL ON CASE REVIEWS BEING
CARRIED OUT

REF: A. BAGHDAD 477

IB. BAGHDAD 364

Classified By: PRT Team Leader John Kincannon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is a PRT Karbala reporting cable.

I1. (C) As reported in reftels, Da'wa -- in order to guarantee the Sadrists' continued political quiescence in Karbala -- has offered to expedite the closure of criminal cases stemming from the deadly violence that marred the Shabaniyah observances in August 2007. In the crackdown that followed, over 50 suspects from radical Shi'a cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi militia and its rival, the ISCI-backed Badr Corps, were arrested on terrorism charges. 37 cases were ultimately prosecuted and are pending appeal, while others remain in jail awaiting trials. Former governor and current provincial UN Assistance Mission to Iraq representative Ali Kamonah told the PRT that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki dispatched a delegation of judges and lawyers to Karbala in early February with instructions to seal a deal promising speedy resolution of the cases with the leaders of the Sadr-backed Independent Free People's Trend list.

I2. (C) On February 23, PRT members asked Chief Appellate Judge Abid Nour al-Fatlawi whether he was aware of the deal and how it might be fulfilled. Abid Nour said he had heard rumors that Da'wa had made such a bargain with the Sadrists. He confirmed that case reviews are in process but denied that any delegation had been sent to Karbala to carry them out. The Chief Judge continued that many in the province and in Baghdad are anxious to put the events of Shabaniyah 2007 behind them; the judiciary is as eager as the executive and legislative branches, albeit for rule-of-law vice political reasons. He said accelerating the resolution of the cases could happen within the letter and spirit of the law, and -- with a smile -- predicted that anyone who might accuse Da'wa of making false promises to the Sadrists would have a difficult time proving it.

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